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ABSTRACT

The Rural Development Distance Learning and Training Strategy targets locally recruited field staff of the World Bank Rural Sector. Field staff at the bank's mission offices worldwide are heterogeneous in terms of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, social class, and religion. However, they have the following in common: they follow the Bank's work rules and corporate culture; they share the same job responsibilities; and they have access to means of communication and information that allow them the delivery of instruction and training. Staff needs for learning and training have been identified through a needs assessment report and a formal content analysis of interviews with rural development experts. The core training program provides learning opportunities to enable all rural field staff to perform effectively and efficiently in their current and future assignments. Three broad categories of knowledge and skill needs are bank operations, rural development, and basic skills. The range of training/learning products to enable field staff to follow self-paced learning and distance learning courses and workshops includes printed materials, videotapes and workbook sets, Internet-based training units, CD-ROMs, and audiocassettes. Staff may choose the medium or combination of media most suited to their work and family situation and time availability. The distance learning and training strategy also features interactive communication using e-mail, discussion forums via the Internet or Intranet, and videoconferencing. (Contains 14 references) (YLB)

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The World Bank Rural Development Field Staff Distance Learning and Training Strategy

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The geographical scatter of World Bank Field Staff creates a unique distance learning and training situation, where the sources of knowledge and information are separated by distance and time. A distance learning approach will be emphasized in the new World Bank Rural Development Training Strategy. *

Our planet has changed tremendously over the past fifty years, and so has the World Bank (WB), especially in its membership, organizational structure, the size of its operations, and its development agenda. From 38 members in 1946 to 177 members today, the World Bank has expanded to near-universal membership. New affiliates have been established to complement the World Bank's work and to address its new priorities.

The Wold Bank, as part of its strategic renewal process, has embarked on a program of *decentralization*, which places more responsibility for decision-making and client interaction at country level. The *decentralization program* has led to an increase in the number of locally recruited staff. These men and women, designated *Field Staff* (FS), are recruited from a variety of work and experience backgrounds and have in common the characteristics of being new to the World Bank, its work culture, and its sector development strategies. It is essential that this Field Staff obtains and develops the World Bank knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to effectively provide the advice and support required by governments for *Rural Development* (RDV) (Maguire, et al., FY99 Strategy for WB/RDV FS Training, 1998).

The geographical scatter of World Bank Field Staff creates a unique distance learning and training situation, where the sources of knowledge and information are separated by distance and time from those who need access to training/learning opportunities. Distance, time and financial resources limit the possibility of traditional face-to-face or classroom training so a *distance learning approach* will be emphasized in the *new World Bank Rural Development FY99 Training Strategy* to overcome these limitations. (Maguire, et al., FY99 Strategy for WB/RDV FS Training, 1998).

Rural Development Field Staff

The target audience of the *FY99 Rural Development Distance Learning and Training Strategy* is the field staff members of the World Bank Rural Sector. This personnel is located at the mission offices of the Bank around the world. The RDV field staff is constituted by almost 450 individuals with different educational and professional backgrounds (*World Bank Rural Development Sector: Vision to Action, 1997*). This group of people is culturally and ethnically diverse, speaking different languages (using English as the *lingua franca* of communication), also, they come from very unique social structures (from tribal societies and cast societies to social class societies), and very diverse political contexts. The RDV field staff is a very heterogeneous group in terms of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, social class, religion, and educational and professional

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* *The World Bank Rural Development Field Staff Distance Learning and Training Strategy* was created in collaboration with Charles Maguire, WB/ESSD/RDV Senior Institutional Development Specialist, Jiping Zhang, WB/ RDV Consultant, and Fernando Mortera-Gutierrez, WB/RDV Summer Intern.

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background. What they have in common is that they work for the World Bank, they follow the work rules of this institution and its corporate culture, they have similar salary, and they share the same job responsibilities. They, also, have access to means of communication and information, such as: telephone, fax, radio, television, satellite, Internet, email, audiographics, etc. These means of communication allow them the delivery of instruction and training. Another commonality that they share is that they are scattered in space and time. They have very different schedules, so the time used to study or training vary enormously. Many of these individuals are married and are males. They, also, share a professional background on *Agricultural Research and Extension* with work experiences on issues related to *rural development*, such as: *crops, irrigation, fisheries, soil, forestry, rural organization, community participation and sustainability*.

Training Needs

The learning and training needs for the RDV/Field Staff training strategy were defined under the umbrella of the general *RDV Training Strategy* (1998). This general training strategy is the result of the "World Bank's renewal program [*that*] has altered the way in which in service training is conducted. . . . planned, implemented, evaluated, and funded in the Rural Sector" (Maguire, Mortera, & Zhang., RDV Training Strategy, 1998, p. 1). "In 1998, Bank-wide concern with the training needs of increased numbers of *Field Staff*, hired as a result of the Bank's program of decentralization, resulted in an increased commitment to meet Field Office staff training requirements" (Maguire, et al., RDV Training Strategy, 1998, p. 1). On the other hand, "Advances in communications and training technology continued to favor self paced and distance learning approaches over traditional classroom or face-to-face training in public institutions and private sector enterprises world wide" (Maguire, et al., RDV Training Strategy, 1998, p. 1).

Therefore, under the umbrella of the *General RDV Training Strategy*, the needs for the learning and training strategy of *Field Staff* were established using two main instruments: The first one was a *Needs Assessment Report*. The purpose of this needs assessment was to define field staff work responsibilities, identification of primary bank clients, appraisal field staff ability to fulfill client needs and job responsibilities, identify field staff training needs (attitudes, knowledge, and skills) in the context of their job responsibilities and client needs, define the constraints to participating in training workshops and courses, identify incentives that would encourage field staff participation in training activities at a distance, and, finally, identify efficient and effective training methods to be used at a distance. This needs assessment was conducted at the beginning of 1998, and it found the following:

Table I
Rural Development Department Field Staff Needs Assessment Findings

General Findings: • Acknowledgement by the World Bank headquarters and field staff of the need for more training, knowledge, and skills in the area of Rural Development and World Bank issues. • World Bank HQ/F staff need to know the "state of the art" of their area of expertise to improve their job performance • The major constraints for participating in training programs were: Time pressures, training budget restrictions, lack of an explicit World Bank policy on the importance for training (motivation), lack of responsibility at the senior management level about staff development, and the thematic teams are at various stage of development that do not allow them to fully support the training program. • Need for the World Bank hierarchy and Rural Sector Board to develop and circulate explicit policy to support training for job performance improvement. • Managers have to help staff to identify and monitor their training needs. • Need for better training orientations for new Field Staff on WB procedures, policies, rules, and so on.
Recommended Training Needs Areas: 1. Technical: 1.a Technical skills (e.g. RDV strategies & policies, extension, agribusiness development, GIS/LIS, water resources management, etc.) 1.b Project Management Skills (e.g. portfolio

management/project supervision, project cycle, quality control, etc.). 2. Cross-Cutting Skills: Gender analysis; assessment of economic, environmental and social impacts; analysis of cultural differences; etc. 3. Client Relationship skills: Collaborative design and implementation of WB/RDV; effective relationship with partners and clients; participatory methods; community development, collaborative problem solving, communication skills, etc.

Source: Training Resource Group. (1998). Results of the assessment of training needs of the World Bank rural development staff. A final report. Washington, D.C.: The Rural Development Department. The World Bank.

The second instrument was a *Formal Content Analysis of Rural Development Experts Interviews*. This formal content analysis was conducted during the month of July 1998. Seven specialists in the Department of Rural Development at World Bank were interviewed during a period of two weeks. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information that would help on the development of the strategy of FY99. The results of the interviews (answers and comments) were analyzed using the *Formal Content Method*, in the following two weeks. The development of analytical categories for the training strategy was made possible through this Formal Content Analysis Method. Nineteen categories were established. The categories were organized in instructional design clusters. These clusters made it possible to have a systematic approach on the design of the training strategy for the RDV Department. These categories were:

Table II
Formal Content Analysis of Rural Development Experts Interviews

I. **Instructional Analysis:** a) RDV/Current Training Program b) RDV/FS Training Needs c) Motivation	III. **Training Content:** a) World Bank Basic knowledge b) Basic skills on forestry, water, soil, livestock, fishing, crop c) Agricultural Research basic knowledge d) Technical Skills e) Communication Skills f) Extension Skills g) Evaluation Skills g) Sustainability Skills h)Decentralization and Community-based Skills i) International Experience
II. **Training Media and Delivery:** Approaches to delivery training a) Face-to-face Training b) Distance-Learning	V. **Management:** a) Time b) Financial Resources (Budget) c) Instructors d) Administrative personnel

Source: Mortera-Gutierrez, F. (1998). Interviews of World Bank Rural Development Experts: A Formal Content Analysis. Washington, D.C.: The Rural Development Department, The World Bank.

The following section will present the *Final Version* of the *FY99 World Bank Rural Development Field Staff Distance Learning and Training Strategy*, which has a special emphasis on a distance learning approach.

Strategy for World Bank Rural Development Field Staff Training and Learning

Statement of Purpose

The RDV/FS Core Training Program will provide needs-based learning opportunities for all rural family staff to enable them to perform effectively and efficiently in their current and future assignments.

Objectives

1. To improve job related Rural Development knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to enhance job performance;

2. To provide rural family staff a window of changes and advances in policy, science and technology in support of the process of rural development; and

3. To make available needs-based learning opportunities to all rural family staff irrespective of location, time and distance, and tailored to available resources.

Field Staff Training Needs

Bank Field Staff have three broad categories of identified knowledge and skill needs:

1. *Bank Operations Related*: This category includes – Bank mission and policies, regulations and procedures, lending instruments, the project cycle, project processing, project implementation, procurement, disbursement, evaluation.

2. *Rural Development Related*: Included are – orientation to sector policies, basic technical knowledge for all sub-sectors, technology transfer, research, extension, sustainability, decentralization, gender, community-based issues; and new technology.

3. *Basic Skills* in the area of: self-learning, computers, communication, languages, management, decision-making and problem solving.

Implementation Strategy

The geographical scatter of World Bank Field Staff creates a unique distance learning situation where the sources of knowledge and information are separated by distance and time from those who need access to training/learning opportunities. Distance, time and financial resources limit the possibility of traditional face to face or classroom training, so a distance learning approach will be emphasized to overcome the limitations.

The program will include, where possible, traditional training/learning offerings in the form of lecture presentations, case studies, seminars, workshops, and study visits. Traditional activities will take place regionally at *training Hubs* or may be made available to those FS who attend the annual *Rural Week* program but may be limited by the availability of resources. Emphasis will be placed on making a selection of training/learning products available to FS to enable them to follow self-paced and distance learning courses. The range of products will include Printed materials, Video and Workbook sets, Internet-based-training units, CD-ROMs and Audio cassettes which will allow individual FS to choose the medium or combination of media most suited to their work and family situation and availability of time. (*Table III summarizes traditional and distance learning-training methods that will be used by the RDV Field Staff*).

The *core teaching learning units* will be supplemented by new and updated products depending on FS training needs and changes in science and technology and strategies for rural development.

A key feature of the FS distance learning program will be *Mentoring* by staff seconded to field offices from Washington. Supervisors of FS will guide their learning programs based on the annual *Development Program Agreement (DPA)* which identifies FS training needs and will provide technical and project related advice and assistance on a continuous basis in a mutually agreed arrangement. Seconded staff will undergo mentoring training prior to being assigned to Field Offices and a course to introduce RDV course/training activity presenters to distance learning techniques and technology will be developed.

The FS distance learning program will feature interactive communication using e-mail, discussion forum via the Intranet or Internet and, where feasible, videoconferencing.

Evaluation of Training

Evaluation of Field Staff training will focus on the impact of training on behavioral change in the workplace. This type of evaluation will involve supervisors, trainees and trainers. Instruments to evaluate the impact of training will be developed in partnership with appropriate Bank entities.

Resources

1. The RDV Core training program has developed a number of sector specific training modules, which have been tested and refined. These modules are available as Video/Workbook sets and will be developed in Internet Based form, CD-ROMs and Audiocassettes. A number of new sector specific modules are being developed in FY99 which will broaden the choice of learning packages.

2. Existing materials, developed for other target groups, will be reviewed and incorporated into the menu of distance learning materials available to FS.

3. Training for Bank Operations and Basic Skills is provided by other Bank units (EDI/LLC) and such training at Hub locations could, when convenient, add Rural Sector traditional training sessions and provide an opportunity to introduce FS to RDV-produced distance learning products.

Table III
Training Methods which will be used for RDV/Field Staff Training

Traditional Training/Learning	Distance Training/Learning
Lecture presentations	Audiovisual (audiocassette, video and workbook sets)
Case Studies	IBT* Courses on the Intranet/Internet
Discussion	CD-ROM
Printed Material	Videoconferencing
Conference	Development Program Agreement (DPA)
Clinics	Distance Mentoring (via email)
Study Visits	Networking (listserv, discussion forum)

*IBT: Internet-Based-Training

Finally, a decentralized but well-coordinated training/learning network will be established in the RDV/Field Staff Strategy. In the network, there are four levels of key players with different responsibilities. Table IV lists the major components of the training/learning network, and illustrates the relationship among each component.

Table IV
World Bank/RDV Training/Learning Network

Level	Key Player	Major Functions and Responsibilities	Resources
1. Staff Members	HQ Staff	To identify individual training needs; To be a life-long, and self-directed learner; To be mentor of field staff; To be internal instructor, and trainer of clients.	Motivation to learn, Personal time and efforts.
	Field Staff	To identify individual training needs; To be a life-long, and self-directed learner; To be a trainer to clients.	Motivation to learn, Personal time and efforts.

II. Thematic Teams	Each Thematic Team	To identify and prioritize group training needs; To initiate training courses in its area; To be source of knowledge in its area of specialty; To be source of internal instructor and mentor.	Collective intelligence; Training budget; Professional knowledge and expertise.
III. RDV Board	Rural Board and Training Coordinator	To identify and prioritize RDV training needs for both HQS and FS; To set up strategy, policy and principles to guide training activities; To be in charge of training plan, information and statistics; To organize the Core Training Program (including Rural Week); To give training support and advice to thematic teams; To coordinate training/learning activities among teams.	Training budget; Training expertise; Department level authority.
IV. Training Environment of RDV	EDISL	Bank-wide training/learning resources; Bank operation-related training courses, and basic skills training courses; Training administration, training infrastructure.	Training facility, material, and expertise; Training budget, training administration capacity.
	Relevant Bank Entities	Partner of developing courses on common topics; Provider of RDV relevant courses; Participants of RDV training courses.	
	External (Universities, development organizations)	Partner of developing courses on development and poverty reduction; Provider of RDV relevant training/learning opportunities; Source of RDV knowledge, and external instructors; Customer of RDV training products.	Knowledge and expertise; Training products and services; Purchasing power.

Source: World Bank, Rural Development Department. (1998). '99 FY Strategy for the RDV Staff Training. Washington, D.C.: World Bank/RDV.

Constraints

There are three main categories of constraints which could limit the effectiveness of the FS Training program: (i) time availability and motivation on the part of FS who need to update knowledge, skills and attitudes; (ii) resources to design, produce and update distance learning products; and (iii) limited access to the Bank information delivery technology. The constraints can only be overcome by a firm commitment on the part of Field Office supervisors and staff to make training in pursuit of personnel effectiveness a continuing priority; and a sustained Bank and RDV allocation of adequate resources to develop, provide and update learning packages for FS (Maguire, et. al., Strategy for WB/RDV FS Training, 1998).

Conclusions

The World Bank Rural Development Field Staff distance learning and training strategy has the commitment to select training/learning products available to FS to enable them to follow self-paced learning and distance learning courses and workshops. The range of products includes

printed materials, videotapes and workbook sets, Internet-based-training units, CD-ROMs and audio cassettes which will allow individual FS to choose the medium or combination of media most suited to their work and family situation and availability of time. The WB/RDV/Field Staff distance learning and training strategy, also, will feature interactive communication (synchronous and asynchronous) using e-mail, discussion forums via the Intranet or Internet and, where feasible, videoconferencing.

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